

Report of the OC/CIC May 1, 2008

About 45 citizen members of the OC/CIC participated in a lively and animated discussion of the Comprehensive Plan during the 9th meeting on May 1, 2008.

Chairman Dave White opened the meeting in the customary manner, reviewing the previous meeting and explaining the outline of the business to be conducted this evening, which is a review of the first four chapters of the Comprehensive Plan.

In the reading of the minutes, Terry Duffy asked that clarification be made to the statement which indicates the “ballot results” in Appendix A-3 represents only a tiny number of respondents to any particular point. Considerable attention was drawn to this portion of the CP, which says “the numeral following an underlined item indicates the number of members having designating the item”. The minutes indicate that the highest numeral is four (4) indicating very few citizens were involved in gathering and preparing the data from the citizens input. Chairman White asked Mr. Duffy to explain what these numbers do mean, if they don’t mean what the plan says.

Mr. Duffy explained that the process was a long list of concerns was created based on citizen input. Following the compilation of this long list, the process was that the members of the steering committee and the CIC who were present at the meeting ranked these in order of importance, using a 1 to 6 ranking method where 1 is most important and six is least important as primary concerns and/or strengths. Accordingly, the numerals do not represent total citizen input as implied, but rather the ranking assigned from community input by the members of the steering committee and the CIC who were present during the process of ranking. The minutes are to be amended to include this explanation and clarification.

A letter from a citizen member expressing concerns about the direction the group is going, focusing on the review of the Comprehensive Plan rather than on the Ordinances. His letter asked the purpose of the review, whether it was to familiarize the citizens with the content, or to critique the document. His recommendation was that if the purpose is to critique the Plan, our time would be better spent, and our work would be more consistent with the action of the governing body in establishing the committee if we were to proceed to studying the ordinances and how they compare to the three themes of the Plan:

- 1) While change is inevitable in the face of growth, Franklin County residents seek to control the changes that occur in their community and to ensure that any change is for the betterment of the County.
- 2) Franklin County residents recognize the unique environment in which they live and they wish to protect the character of the County for future generations.
- 3) Franklin County residents want to ensure that their community is a great place to live, work, and play.

The citizen letter suggested that this group trust the process which created the CP and the findings of the group which led in its development.

Other citizens voiced opinions that review of the plan is necessary as a preparation for addressing zoning and subdivision control ordinances, that in our seven weeks of fact finding, the experts have all consistently emphasized that the CP is the basis of codes and is the cornerstone of those codes, being characterized as the “vision statement” or “mission statement” identifying the end results toward which codes are written and enforced. One citizen stated it is unreasonable to expect this group to trust a process which was not documented, and for which records are unavailable. Reason demands a review of the document and a healthy questioning of the rationale where there is confusion or uncertainty. Following this line of thought, the citizen said it is the responsibility of this group’s members to voice opinions where the CP is either outdated, or appears to state opinions and positions which merit further discussion.

A citizen said that trusting HNTB is not an option, the entire process we are involved in, and the time we have all donated is a result of the commissioner’s effort to include the voice of the people in rewriting the code. We have not been charged with trusting past processes, we have been charged with going forward with writing a Code that represents the will of the people. The vision of the county may be accurately stated in the three dominant themes of the CP, but the vision of the community is the will of the people, which is what this group is formed to discover, and include.

Mr. Gillespie, County Surveyor and one of the citizens who have been involved with both the original process and this process said that he has been approached a lot recently with questions about the OC/CIC and confusion about what we are trying to accomplish and how we got to this point. He says there is discussion in the community that “self serving interests” are being voiced. He reminded everyone that each of us have “self serving interests”, but stated his feeling that the process so far has been managed carefully to assure that each of these “self serving interests” are heard, and that the outcome does represent the “will of the people”. He cited the group’s decision to require a 60% super majority on any matter of substance to the codes which comes before the group for a vote, and reminded us that when that decision was made, the OC went to the extent of saying that if we reach that point and a key decision has only a 60% support level, it will be reviewed to see if there is a practical way to increase the public buy in to a larger extent. He also reminded us that everyone who is a citizen of Franklin County, or a land owner has a vote, illustrating the OC’s dedication to the purpose of providing a recommended code which represents the will of the people.

Discussion continued with a Franklin County citizen from the Batesville area recounting his experience with outside planning efforts in Batesville. He shared that Batesville has involved outside planners since the 1970’s and adopted a zoning plan based on those recommendations. The results are that, “what we have now is plenty of parking, but no small business. It got that way because government representatives left it to the outsiders, the local people and merchants were not included in the planning. The only

hope for different results for us is for us, the People of Franklin County to decide what we want and don't want."

Chairperson White commented that there are a lot of wants and wished in the CP, but there is a stark absence of comments about Freedom and Rights. He said that the things many generations of Americans have struggled for, fought for, and died for are missing. "I don't want anybody to misrepresent my position. I'll defend the will of the people in this process. But, as for me given the choice between what HNTB wants for the community and Freedom...I'll choose Freedom."

Mr. Duffy said that the repeated characterization that this is an HNTB document and outsider document is unfair. "There were people who spent thousands of hours on this process. HNTB expressed concerns throughout the process that our rewrites and revisions to make this document our document and avoid the "boiler plate document" concern were slowing the process. Repeatedly characterizing the CP as an HNTB document and that the citizens of Franklin County were not closely involved in its development is unfair and inaccurate."

A citizen responded, "I appeared personally at a meeting. I was allowed to speak, and was dismissed. In this process we're involved with now everyone in the county is invited to attend, and are welcomed. Everyone has been consistently encouraged to speak up, and speak out. Anyway, that process is history, and we are making history."

Gary Wolf said, "We have been repeatedly told the CP is a living document, we're here to breath some life into it."

A citizen spoke up to say that this talk about "will of the people" is rhetoric. This is a large county, and many people are unaware this process is going on. She said the first group made a huge effort to get the word out, even going door to door. She expressed concern that this group seems to not believe those people involved in the first attempt.

Marvin Stenger said, "Nobody came to my door."

Brian Patterson said there are two documents involved, the CP and the Codes. He said it is not a matter of "not believing" the people involved in the first process, but to complete the job the governing body has given this group, we must understand both documents.

The comment was made that when 800 people showed up at the High School in January it was clear that the original process had missed the mark.

Jim Suhre pointed out that the act of the governing body creating the OC/CIC charged this group with rewriting the code. All of the experts we've heard from have consistently emphasized the importance of the CP as basis of code. As others on the OC have done, he has spoken with citizens whose names are on the list of the steering committee and CIC from the past effort, and been told that they really weren't involved in the process to a large extent. The CP says that the original group met on four occasions between April

1998 and July 1998, and the report was turned over to HNTB in September 1998. Based on this information from the plan itself and from discussions with those who the plan says were involved, but who personally say they really weren't, he believes a review of the CP, and if that review involves criticism is included in our responsibility as citizens, and as representatives of the governing body who formed this group. If there is dissatisfaction with the plan, it needs to be voiced in this process.

Mr. Duffy said "there record is clear that you have dissatisfaction with the plan, there is no need to continue to beat on that subject, let's move on.

Chairman White led a review of the Introduction and asked for public comments.

Mr. Duffy said the introduction sets the stage for the entire plan, and merits careful review and understanding, it is the framework for the rest of the work. He asked if the community supports the chart on Page 9 (Figure 1.1: The Comprehensive Planning Process). No disagreement was voiced. "Do we buy into the strengths and weakness on Page 10", he asked. Rick McMillin asked for clarification of the weakness identified as "Reality". Terry said this refers to the reality of our situation, what works against us".

Mary Harsh asked how Education could be identified as both a strength and a weakness. There being no response from those who had spent thousands of hours rewriting and directing the efforts of HNTB, the plan was referred to (Page 10 Paragraph 2) which says, "those things identified in both areas are things seen as strengths today, but that may not be sufficient to sustain future growth to the extent desired."

Mr. Suhre recommended adding two important strengths of the community:

- 1) Community characterized by independent people, little regulatory interference, and a people with a "live and let live" philosophy.
- 2) Heritage of old line families, who have been part of the community for generations, and whose ancestors built the community into what it is today. The Pioneer Heritage and self sufficiency and self determination are characteristics to maintain and defend..

Stanley Monroe pointed out that although the CP points out education levels are low, unemployment is also low, and that is a sign that something is right with what we've been doing.

Mr. Wolf said that identification of Government as a weakness is a good thing.

Mr. Suhre said there are two viewpoints from which a CP can be formulated, one being making the assumption that things are wrong and need to be fixed, the other that things are right, and need to be protected. He said that the CP seems to be more focused on how to create a different Franklin County, rather than how to maintain the character of our Heritage. He pointed out that those experts who have addressed us have indicated we are in a better position than many of them found themselves in when they assumed the duties in other counties.

Mr. Franzman, who is the one person who works with our Planning and Zoning every day told us that other counties come to us for advice in regards to how to simulate our success in maintaining a rural lifestyle, etc. He said his view is that the CP is formulated to fix problems that may not exist, rather than building on our success.

Ruth Mannix said that with growth, new problems arise.

Having spent considerable time on the introduction, Mr. Suhre moved that the entire CIC vote whether to continue to dissect the introduction, or move on. Mr. McMillin seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. The same motioned and seconded to move on, and the motion carried.

Mr. Suhre led the review of Chapter 2 – Demographic Analysis.

Figure 2.1 shows population change from 1930 to 2000 for Franklin County and seven contiguous counties. The Franklin County growth chart is remarkably flat, and by far the lowest slope of the eight counties in the data.

Our growth comes from immigration, not birthrate.

Figure 2.2 shows that two townships had high growth between 1990 and 2000, Whitewater and Ray. County growth from 1990 to 2000 overall was 13%, a rate far higher than any prior decade recorded.

Figure 2.3 is an age pyramid, indicating lower than expected population in the 0-4, 5-9, 20-24, 25-29, and 30-34 age groups.

Education level and unemployment data was reviewed. Mr. Monroe requested the final paragraph on page 24 be read into the record: “While Franklin County’s education levels are lower than the state average, unemployment in 2000 was 2.7%, and all time low. While unemployment has been higher in the past, there is no indication that the county’s lower than average educational levels are impeding residents from finding work...”

Figure 2.5 indicates commuter patterns of 45% of the population leaving the county for work. This impacts sales tax revenues, as those who work outside the county probably make purchases in other counties on their way home from work.

Figure 2.6 shows household composition.

Figure 2.7 shows employment by industry. Services account for 26.9% of jobs, followed by Retail Trade (18.84%). Farm and Government roles represent 13.97% and 13.4% respectively.

Mr. Suhre shared his view of the contents of the chapter, and asked for community input. A citizen said that data is outdated and could benefit from an update. Another agreed.

Another said that school enrollment data from 1997 to 2007 is a good indication of growth, and that public records indicate a reduction of 10-12 students during that period.

Mr. Duffy recommended STATS Indiana as a source of more current data.

A citizen said that under current economic conditions if the assistance lines are not growing pretty dramatically, it is a good sign of how we are doing. The comment was made, we can't bring Visteon back, but we can review this plan.

Mr. Suhre spoke to the repeated notation of the need for more affordable housing in the CP. Discussion of whether if this is true, is it the role of government to get involved in making such housing available, or is that a role of the private sector? Mr. Suhre continued, saying his own research of surrounding communities costs for housing is in conflict with the CP's statements, his research indicates prices are moderate in our county. Mr. Vonder Muelen clarified. "Jim, you are right, and so is the CP." At the time the plan was done there was a shortage, but that situation has corrected itself over the time between then and now. On the subject, Mr. Duffy pointed out that household composition and size and population change must be reviewed together. Since household size is decreasing and population is increasing, the rate of demand for housing units rises faster than the rate of population. These combined factors created a concern at the time of the plan particularly in Whitewater Township where the factors represented potential stresses to school and infrastructure services.

Mr. Suhre asked if any specific data had been gathered related to the cost of services for our county, versus the benefit of property tax revenue on new residential development. Mr. Duffy said that there are "generic" cost of services data charts, and charts relevant to other areas similar to Franklin County, which were looked at, but that there is no actual cost of services/benefit of property tax revenue for residential development data for Franklin County. This is considered critical data. Our services, or lack of services and the efficiency or lack of efficiency in our service providers have been the subject of a lot of discussions outside of this committee. We need to have access to the data in order to make informed decisions, and take high risk in accepting assumptions based on data not relevant to our county.

Chairman White summarized: Chapter Two is for the most part correct. The People would like to see the data updated in at a nominal cost. There is some question regarding the CP's statement of need for more affordable housing. A citizen also suggested data be provided which shows the economic impact of tourism and visitors and included in the plan.

Terry Duffy led the presentation of Chapter 3 – Existing Land Use

The framework of the subgroup was:

“Is this still accurate?” and “Is this relevant to the Planning issues?”

Determination is, most is still useful.

Is figure 3.1 – Developed versus Undeveloped Land still pretty accurate? Mr. Gillespie said the GIS is 2006 update, and we could update this map.

Same question for figure 3.2 – Character of the Land. Suggest it also be updated.

Map on Page 38 shows slopes. Terry recommended that it be updated to show 15% and 20% slope areas based on feedback from the community and information gathered during the fact finding process. It also needs to be made more readable for everyone.

A suggestion to include by reference access to the county’s topographical maps was made and seemed sound to the citizens. Adding the aquifer to the Water Features Map (Figure 3.2) was suggested as well.

It was suggested that Page 41 showing trends in agricultural property be updated, noting that a recent article states that farmland in Fayette County is currently selling at nearly three times the price indicated in the chart.

Dave Mannix said that what struck him in this chapter as very useful was the wetlands and various soil types maps, indicating areas best suited to development and least suited.

Another citizen commented that he was struck by the 3% figure for developed land, saying that many people he spoke to prior to the January meeting offered much higher estimates when asked what they believed this number was. The 3% in the Plan is much lower population density and development rate than the perception in the community.

Mr. Duffy concluded that the subcommittee’s determination is that Chapter 3 is still a fair assessment of the physical characteristics of the county, and a solid foundation.

It being close to 9PM, Chairman White said it was pretty clear we would not get to chapter four this week, and would cover that in the next meeting. He asked once again if there was anything anyone was upset about, or if anyone felt they were not getting a chance to speak out.

Gary Wolf reminded us that the announcements were through May 1, and we need to decide what our meeting schedule will be going forward. Following discussion, it was decided that consistency in meeting every Thursday at 7 PM in the Commissioners Room is important through May. Joe Gillespie moved and Bob Bane seconded a motion to meet every Thursday at 7 PM at the Commissioners Room, the motion carried.

Chairperson White addressed the earlier comment that the community was not aware of the meetings. He stated that communication is the responsibility of each of us, and asked everyone to get the word out. Publishing classifieds in surrounding newspapers is very expensive, Commissioner Wilson reported the costs so far amount to \$1300. Fiscal responsibility is the responsibility of every citizen, so the best advertising (word of mouth) is the method we will employ.

Free community activities slots will continue to run in the newspapers, and Ruthie Mannix volunteered to get WRBI to run a community service notice as well.

Every citizen is reminded, this process belongs to you, the People. The OC has made the determination that every substantive decision will be voted on by the People, and that every citizen of Franklin County and every landowner is allowed to vote. Discussion are open to all who attend, the best representation is representing yourself, and decisions will be made that will affect you. The meetings are informative, and the interaction is fun. Make the CIC the place to be on Thursday night from 7 to 9 PM through the month of May. You can get to know your neighbors, and be part of the next two hundred years of our county's heritage!